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SOUL OF SLOVENIA

Valentin Vodnik

(1758—1819)

A Rousing Song

*S*lovene! your thriving land
serves well a working hand.
Field and vineyard,
mount and sea,
trade and mining
are your meat.

You have a nimble mind,
a frame both strong and fine.
Sought by Fortune,
blessed by wit,
she is yours if
you don't sleep.

Look, Nature offers all:
do not neglect her call.
The sluggard gets
a beggar's staff,
a tattered sleeve,
a dry carafe.

Translated by Nada Grošelj



Brane Kreuzer



Ivan Tavčar

(1851—1923)

Flowers in Autumn

*S*lovene peasant woman, we pay you yet too little respect! You are like a mule that drives haggard and shabby across Andalusian rocks! You are virtuous in your work, ever worried that some corner of the house might cave in, that your husband might waste too much at the pub, that your children might be corrupted. You have little of life, you poor martyr! But it is thanks to you that the oppressed and torn Slovene homeland has survived! You are the main pillar of this homeland, Slovene peasant woman, you who usually sleeps on straw and under a torn blanket, and who eats your husband's and children's leftovers!

Translated by Jason Blake



Tomaž Perko



Oton Župančič

(1878—1949)

To Live – To Die

*T*o live – to die is our common fortune,
yet our end is planted in the heights.
Behold this tree: with no thought of its future
it struggles for its purpose through the times.

Translated by Nada Grošelj



Stane Jagodič



Prežihov Voranc

(1893—1950)

Wildflowers

*T*his is how it is with you: You're not like other children. You were not rocked in cradles; your cradles were the furrows and ditches and edges of fields, where the sun baked you and the rain soaked you. It was doves and partridges that sang by your cradle, lightning that shone over you, and thunder that would wake you... That's why you're like wildflowers. You sprang forth on your own, uncultivated, like wayward seeds in a furrow. As just as a wildflower struggles in its surroundings, so, too, have you of the Hudabivnik clan struggled in life. You lay down roots wherever you find yourselves. Don't let yourselves be pushed around, do not suffer the humility of injustice, but neither should you harm or do wrong to another. Look at how they tortured me even before I had any inkling of the world. Perhaps they will torture you, too. When that time comes, grit your teeth and recall that you are wildflowers – that you are Hudabivniki. You nine have come after me, in fifty years there might be another hundred, in a hundred years there might be five, ten times that many. Then, united, you will be able to battle for equality, for justice...

Translated by Jason Blake



Leander Fužir



Srečko Kosovel

(1904—1926)

Disappointment

Death has settled on my heart,
and yet the fire below the rock is still alive;
murder, cry, inflict a scar,
I will not comply.

The golden altar 'mongst the ashen stones,
I know who brought it all apart,
but I will mend it with a resurrection,
I will not comply.

Death has settled on my heart.
She thought that I would not survive.
My spirit which will not depart
will cry: I will not comply.

Translated by Uroš Mozetič



France Slana



Miško Kranjec

(1908—1983)

Stories from My Uncles

*Y*ou see, eh? It's hard, if you're hungry, hard if you're thirsty, hard if you have no money in your pocket to buy something. But the worst is if your soul's empty, hungry, thirsty – I'm thinking of the heart. But I'm asking you, could you even live with an empty heart?"

"I'm not living, uncle."

He thought for a bit, looked at me, and said, "What is it you even believe in?"

"In man, in life, in man's future..."

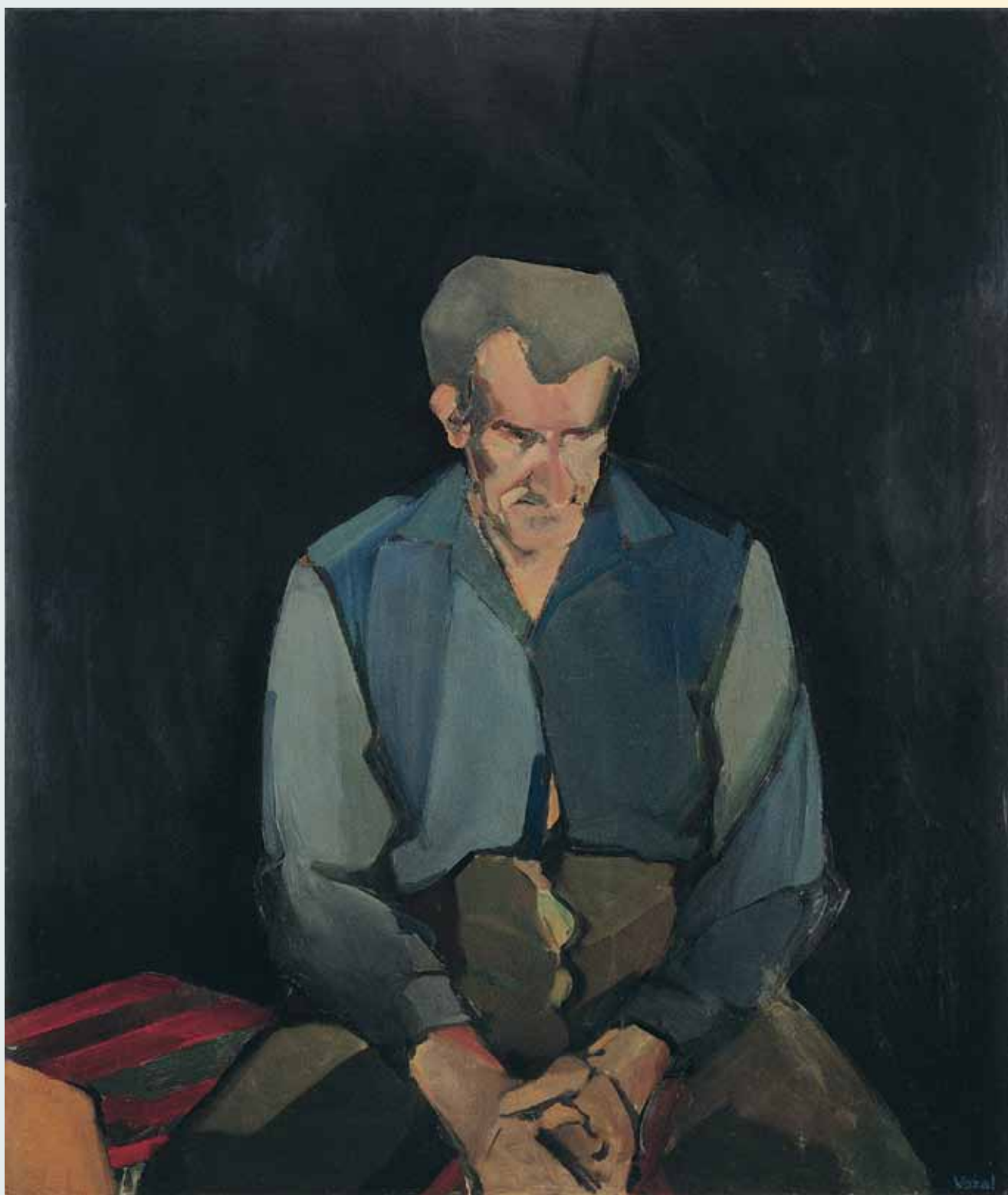
My uncle stops, winks, takes me by the sleeve, stops me, too, and says, "In man, you say?" I nod. But he says: "And what sort of man, I ask you? Surely not the sort from here, our Poljana region that's so full of mere pranksters."

"In the sort of man, Uncle, that wishes no wrong to anyone, and, as best he can, does only good. In an honest one, great in spirit and heart, noble in deed. Even in our Poljana man, Uncle, a man who knows how to be good, honest..."

Translated by Jason Blake



Franc Vozelj



Jure Detela

(1951—1992)

Tomcat Lojze

A little beast,
a fluid joy,
in a white neck
wrapped;
a waterfall shining
like a kaleidoscope,
like constellations –
a map grown in
fur,
with bright eyes
without decline.

Translated by Uroš Mozetič



France Slana

